TC 2575

CLERGY AND LAITY CONCERNED
198 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10038 212-964-6730

The Consultation of Clergy and Laity Concerned (CALC)
before
The Subcommittee on Petitions, Information and Assistance
of
The Special Committee on Decolonization
of
The United Nations
presented by
Michael A. Chamberlain
on
June 15th, 1981

As a representative of Clergy and Laity Concerned (CALC), I would like to thank you for this opportunity to address this Sub-Committee. Since the first debate on decolonization arose in the U.N. in 1946 regarding Indonesia, non-governmental organizations have played a significant and active role in helping to assure the right to self-determination for non self-governing peoples around the world. We at CALC welcome this opportunity to inform this Sub-Committee about our activities, particularly those having to do with the dissemination of information on decolonization issues.

Mr. Chairman,

First, I would like to provide you with a brief history and description of our organization.

We were founded in 1965 and since then have remained an organization seeking to unite people of all faiths to work on such issues as Human Rights, Human Security (and Nuclear Disarmament), World Hunger and other Peace and Justice issues. In the late 1960's, the late Rev. Martin Luther King , Jr. served as our Chairperson and over the years, several prominent figures have worked very closely with CALC. Today, CALC has a national network of over 40 chapters and affliates around the U.S. We sponsor speaking tours, film showings and educational projects on human rights and human justice through the active work of our 8,000 members. Our info-

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rmational mailings reach over 20,000 people. We also publish a newsletter, CALC Report, which reaches nearly 10,000 people 8 times a year.

I hope that this will give you some sense of our activities, the amount of contact we have with people in the U.S. and the ways in which we are able to disseminate information.

Mr. Chairman,

I would now like to turn to the specific activities that CALC has been working on which relate to decolonization issues now before the U.N.

The decolonization issues that we have undertaken come under the programs adminstered by our Human Rights Task Force. Recognizing that self-determination is not only the collective right of a people but also a basic human right, we are encouraged by recent events such as the seating of Zimbabwe at the U.N. and the independence of Vanuatu and St. Vincent-Grenadines. We continue to be concerned for all peoples who struggle for the same right to self-determination, especially the people of Namibia and the Western Sahara.

Mr. Chairman,

Due to the broad range of our programs, we have chosen not to work on an extensive list of decolonization issues. Instead, we have carefully chosen to work on those items which have an urgent

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need for action and on which we are suited to take consistent and effective action. At this time, CALC is working on two decolonization issues, the Question of South Africa and the Question of East Timor.

I would like to outline our work on these two issues and point out some of our recent activities on these projects.

Mr. Chairman,

There is no question within this Sub-Committee on the need for self-determination for the people of South Africa.

Resolution 35/118 which was adopted just this past January clearly reaffirms this position by declaring apartheid as incompatible with the U.N. Charter. In addition, the U.N. has set forth a clear and uncompromising program of action to implement this resolution which calls on member states to end all forms of collaboration with South Africa (Resolution 35/118/Annex), especially with regard to loans and investments to South Africa (Resolution 35/118/Annex para. 5).

Our work on South Africa began several years ago when CALC and several other national organizations began a project to stop private and institutional investments in the apartheid government of South Africa. This work was organized as the Campaign to Stop Bank Loans to South Africa. Throughout the U.S., CALC chapters joined in the active campaign to curb investments from their

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communities to South Africa. Through education and organizing in their communities, schools, churches and individuals joined the protest against apartheid by withdrawing their funds from banks with investments in South Africa. In two communities, banks conceded to this pressure and passed resolutions regarding their investment policies in South Africa.

In 1979, it was apparent that this campaign needed its own organizational structure. At that time, CALC co-founded the Committee to Stop Bank Loans to South Africa (COBLSA) with the American Committee on Africa. COBLSA continues its activities and has ties with similar campaigns in Canada and England.

CALC has continued to provide information on South Africa to its chapters, members and supporters over the years. Through mailings, films, speaking tours and articles in its newsletter, CALC has not only exposed the extent of U.S. investment in South Africa but has also pointed out how these investments promotes the continuation of apartheid in South Africa. The issue of how nuclear weapons in South Africa will threaten human security has recently become of concern to us.

Mr. Chairman,

We are pleased to inform you that the success of this project has led to a broadening of the campaign. CALC, along with the American Committee on Africa, the Washington Office on Africa and

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other groups, has been working since last December to initiate a Campaign to Stop Public Investment to South Africa. Just this past weekend, the campaign was formally begun at a Conference here in New York City. Legislators from 25 states around the U.S. attended the Conference. The response to this campaign at the Conference was extraordinarily good. With this new campaign, we hope to draw the connections between U.S. public investment in South Africa and the lack of investment for the needs of racial minorities here in the U.S.

Mr. Chairman,

We encourage this Sub-Committee, the Special Committee on Decolonization and the U.N. General Assembly to take all necessary measures to end the apartheid policy of South Africa and to intensify all efforts to promote the implementation of its own resolutions on this matter.

Mr. Chairman,

I would now like to turn to our activities on the question of East Timor. We are very concerned about the reports of human rights violations and the question of self-determination in East Timor.

Unlike the question of South Africa, the question of East Timor is not a matter of unanimity among the member states at the U.N. You are, I am sure, aware of the several U.N. resolutions on the question of East Timor, eight in all, that clearly stated that an

act of self-determination has not yet taken place in the territory. The most recent of these (35/598) was voted on just last November.

It has been claimed that the people of East Timor have exercised their free and democratic right to self-determination in accordance with U.N. resolutions 15/14 (XV), 15/41 (XV) and 26/25 (XXV). But, as Professor Roger Clark of the Rutgers Law School has pointed out, paragraph 'a' of Principle IX of Resolution 1541 (XV) states that, "The integrating territory should have attained an advanced stage of self-government with free political institutions." By any assessment, such would have been impossible in 1976 when this so-called act of self-determination is said to have taken place in East Timor. I myself have spoken to someone who was in East Timor at that time, the Executive Producer for Indonesian Television (TV-RI), Mr. Ishadi S.K., who said that conditions in East Timor then made it impossible for a majority of the people of East Timor to have a voice in such a representative process.

The reports of a number of organizations and individuals about human rights violations leave us deeply concerned. Amnesty International has pointed out that the disappearances of persons and lack of access to prisons inside East Timor provide a basis for serious concern about the situation. In my interviews with

East Timorese refugees, I found that nearly everyone I spoke with had experienced beatings, extortion or intimidation by Indonesians, especially by members of the military.

For both of these reasons, I would like to outline why CALC has been moved to adopt East Timor as a matter of priority.

Mr. Chairman,

CALC is the first and only non-governmental organization to work on the question of East Timor as a full-time, on-going project. As with our work on South Africa, we chose to do this out of a sense of urgency and a sense that we could provide information to a large number of Americans who were unaware of the problems in East Timor. For years there has been very little public information available in the U.S. on the situation in East Timor. The scale of the problem in East Timor and the seriousness of the principles involved warrant an educational project.

For several years, we have been distributing information, organizing speaking tours and chanelling public opinion on East Timor with the co-operation of other organizations. Over the past two years, we have intensified our work in response to a growing body of concern over the issue. In the last year, we have helped organize speaking and education programs in over 100 communities around the U.S. Through these programs, we have informed over 50,000 people of the situation in East Timor and we now have nearly

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1,500 people who are now actively supporting our educational efforts.

We have paid particular attention to the gathering and dissemination of information on this issue. Besides our regular mailings on East Timor, CALC has helped reprint news articles and editorials on East Timor. A Special Issue of CALC Report was devoted entirely to East Timor last year, and at the beginning of this year, CALC helped to publish an extensive report on an International Conference on East Timor which was held here in New York last October. The Conference itself attracted participants from many countries around the world, as well as several delegates to the U.N. and over 200 human rights activists from around the U.S. The Conference took place around the time of the last Decolonization Committee debate on East Timor and helped to publicize these proceedings. The Conference Report which was produced also included a reprint of last fall's U.N. resolution (35/598) on East Timor, along with a record of the voting.

Because the situation in East Timor involves violations of international law and human rights, as well as a famine, we have taken care to provide this information we have gathered on East Timor to United Nations associations, Law associations, Hunger Action projects, Peace and Justice organizations, Religious Action programs and many other similarly concerned and organized groups around the U.S. and overseas. At the same time, we have continued

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to make the opinions of the people we have been in contact with known to both the media and the U.S. government.

Whenever we have talked to members of the House of Representatives or the U.S. Senate, we have found them interested and concerned. This is borne out by the several Hearings, Resolutions, letters and discussions that have taken place in both the House and Senate. This deep concern is very broad and includes such people as Senator Edward Kennedy, Representative Don Edwards, Senator Paul Tsongas and Representative Tom Harkin.

Mr. Chairman,

We would like to take this opportunity to convey to you the opinions of the people whom we are in contact with about East Timor.

First of all, and almost without exception, people are shocked that they have not heard more about the issue. We are frequently asked, "What has the United Nations been doing about this and why haven't we heard more about it?" With these experiences and questions in mind, we urge this Sub-Committee, the Special Committee on Decolonization and the U.N. to carry reports on East Timor in your publications, including Objective: Justice and to issue a new report in the Decolonization series, in accordance with U.N. resolution 35/120. The Decolonization series report on East Timor that was published by the U.N. in 1976 remains one of the most

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authoritative sources of information on East Timor up to the time of the invasion and we are sure that an updated report would be equally well received. We would also urge that the U.N. and its appropriate organizations seriously consider providing a documentary film and other visual materials on the situation in East Timor. We are constantly receiving requests for an up-to-date documentary on East Timor and there is none available.

The other reaction that we have gotten from the people whom we are in contact with is that they are extremely disturbed about the suffering endured by the people of East Timor and the deprivation of their human rights, especially their right to self-determination.

People in the U.S. feel particularly responsible to the people of East Timor, as the Government of the U.S. has continually supplied the Government of Indonesia with military equipment that has been used in East Timor and has continually provided diplomatic recognition of Indonesia's annexation of East Timor, in repeated opposition to U.N. resolutions. We have spoken to many people who were deeply disturbed to learn from news-reports that the Indonesian military was using U.S. made counter-insurgency aircraft in "military exercises" held in several areas of East Timor earlier this spring.

There is a particular concern that the human and political

rights of the East Timorese be protected by impartial international bodies. The reports of famines, imprisonments without trials and the "disappearances" of persons opposed to the Indonesian occupation that have come out of East Timor leave us very troubled.

Mr. Chairman,

Mindful of this, we urge that this Sub-Committee, the Special Committee on Decolonization and the U.N. General Assembly take all necessary measures to implement fully U.N. resolutions 34/40 and 35/27 which call upon the UNHCR, UNICEF and the World Food Program to render assistance to the people of East Timor, so that their suffering may be alleviated. We also urge that the U.N., its committees and its member states to render all necessary moral, material and diplomatic assistance to the people of East Timor who continue to struggle to exercise their right to self-determination. In addition, this Sub-Committee, the Special Committee on Decolonization, the U.N. and its member states, in recognition of resolution 35/118 and resolution 35/29, should intensify their efforts to end the foreign domination of East Timor by Indonesia, which all of the people I have spoken to agree is a "denial of fundamental human rights" and a serious impediment to world peace.

Mr. Chairman,

The President of the 35th General Assembly, Ambassador R. von Wechmar of the Federal Republic of Germany said in a meeting

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with non-governmental organizations earlier this year that non-governmental organizations are "the U.N.'s most vital link to the outside, and they should let the Secretariat and Delegates know what the people of the world think should be done."

Mr. Chairman,

We at CALC recognize our special responsibility as a non-governmental organization at the U.N. We appreciate this opportunity to share information about our activities and the opinions of the people of the U.S. on issues of decolonization. We hope that we can work more closely in the future to exchange and disseminate information on these matters.

Mr. Chairman,

I thank you.

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Over the past year, the East Timor program of CALC has

-organized discussions and public educational programs in over 100 communities,

-been interviewed for newsreports and feature articles for more than 30 city newspapers, as well as several newspapers with national circulations, including the Denver Post, Burlington Free Press, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Minneapolis Tribune, Lincoln Star, Rochester Democrat & Chronicle, Honolulu Star, Nashville Tennesean, New Haven Advocate, In These Times, WIN magazine and the Asia Record,

-participated in 38 radio programs in 24 different cities around the U.S., including programs syndicated to over 100 radio stations around the U.S. and the Armed Forces Radio Network,

-made appearances on 6 television programs in 5 states,

-been invited to give educational programs in over 40 colleges and universities including Syracuse University, University of California-Berkeley, Claremont College, University of Colorado, University of Oregon, Princeton University, University of Vermont, Yale University, Ohio University, Brown University, Ohio State University, Washington University, University of Minnesota, Northwestern University, University of Illinois, Seattle University and the University of Wisconsin,

-reached over 50,000 people through these activities and gained nearly 1,500 active supporters.